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This monograph is designed to assist English teachers who may seek help in overcoming the pressing problem of teaching composition. It is prepared to aid in the formation of a sequential and flexible program in composition which prevents ineffective teaching of the same skills and places the emphasis on real writing skills rather than mere mechanical correctness. This publication states what needs to be taught in order to produce satisfactory writing at all levels from kindergarten through college. It suggests an order in which the elements of writing should be presented, and gives specific ways in which to teach them.

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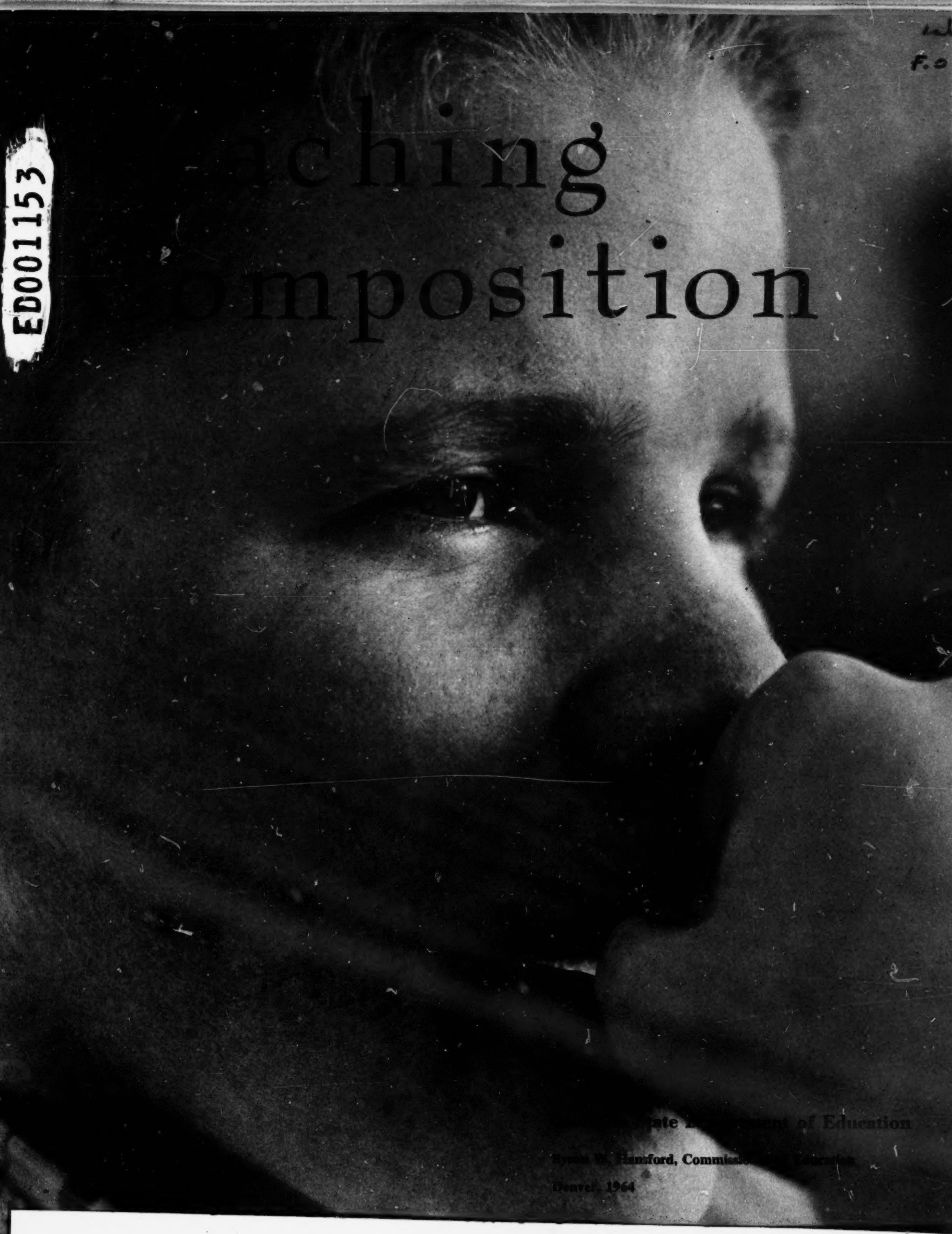

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TEACHING COMPOSITION

Suggestions for the Teacher
Kindergarten through College

Prepared by the

Colorado State Department of Education

Language Arts Advisory Committee

Colorado State Department of Education

OFFICE OF INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES

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October 1964

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FOREWORD

It is becoming increasingly apparent that an individual living in today's complex society must be able to communicate effectively his ideas. This means that as a student he must have much practice and guidance in actually expressing his own thoughts.

The Language Arts Advisory Committee of the State Department of Education early in its deliberations felt that the area which was most in need of improvement was composition. Since January, 1963, the Writing Committee and the Advisory Committee as a whole have been actively engaged in designing a publication which would be a bold departure from what is typically being taught in schools and colleges. This guide is the result of that effort.

The Committee in its meetings frequently voiced the belief that this guide should not be taken as the final word with regard to grade placement or methodology, and that it is not intended to be all inclusive. It is suggestive of desirable practices which can and are being followed to help each student reach the goal of "Effectiveness in Communicating Ideas and Feelings, and Overcoming or Avoiding Barriers to Communication," as stated in the Department's publication, *Goals for Education in Colorado.*

The Committee also believed that every attempt should be made to correlate what is suggested here with what is done in other language activities and also in other subject disciplines. It must be remembered that the separating of the language arts into reading, writing, speaking, and listening is primarily for the sake of convenience.

The Colorado State Department of Education wishes to express sincere appreciation to the members of the Advisory Committee and the Writing Committee for their diligent work. We also wish to express our gratitude to the schools and colleges which have made it possible for these people to engage in the production activities. The members of the Committee are listed in the back of this bulletin.

We hope that this guide will furnish something of value to every teacher concerned with language arts; practical suggestions for some, challenging new ideas for others, and a springboard into creative, exciting composition instruction for all. Comments and criticisms indicating how well this goal has been achieved are invited and should be directed to the Colorado State Department of Education.

Byron W. Hansford
Commissioner of Education

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INTRODUCTION:

Why?

. . . . *a monograph on composition.*

"Johnny can't read! Johnny can't write!" Quick and sharp the accusations fly. "Johnny can't spell! Johnny can't think!"

We, Johnny's English teachers, can only say, "We know. We knew. Not all Johnnies can't, of course. But too many of them are unable to do these things. It's not because we haven't cared nor didn't try. Who can help us?"

This monograph is designed to help these busy, harried English teachers who lack time to wade through voluminous discussions of composition which confront them when they seek help. Our suggestions cover the years from kindergarten through teacher training, not because we are overambitious, but because we believe composition skill is a dynamic, growing thing whose basic principles are always much the same.

The Colorado Advisory Committee on Language Arts, twenty-one practicing teachers from all educational levels and from all large geographical divisions of the state, was appointed by the State Department of Education to study the problems of the teaching of English. From the very beginning, we enjoyed an astonishing unanimity of agreement about what is needed for more effective teaching of English. While none of us felt he had the answer, our unanimity, however, encouraged us to feel that each could offer useful suggestions.

First, we agreed that the most pressing problem in teaching English is *composition*. We agreed that:

1. there should be a sequential but flexible program in composition; any individual or any class may not be exactly where he or they should be in a given grade;
2. such a sequential program should prevent the endless and ineffective reteaching of the same tools and skills;
3. there is a deplorable emphasis on mechanical correctness as opposed to the achievement of actual writing skills, which may be corrected by a clear statement of aims in composition (see Chapter 1);
4. nowhere can a teacher assume that needed skills have been taught earlier, but that a statement of specific activities for each level may improve this situation;
5. the best way to ascertain what has been taught and what still needs to be taught is to evaluate actual compositions; and
6. correctness will be much easier to teach, if the student has first been motivated to communicate an idea.

Secondly, we agreed to:

1. state what needs to be taught in order to produce satisfactory writing at any level;
2. suggest an order in which the elements of writing should be presented; and
3. give specific ways in which these elements may be taught.

Three chapters approach the problems of composition from different points of view; each is designed to give a particular kind of help to the teacher. We hope that there will be something here for all levels which will help to clarify aims and achieve ends of this most difficult task.

Nothing here is intended to displace successful techniques nor to discourage creative approaches to the teaching of composition. On the contrary, we hope that the very existence of this monograph will prompt successful teachers to share with the State Department of Education and so with each other the approaches and devices that are actually getting results.

The Committee

CHAPTER ONE:

How?

. . . . *to teach composition.*

Aims of Composition

Our aims in teaching composition are simple: to help students improve their ability to write accurate, meaningful, and vivid prose; to help students understand that what they feel, read, listen to, discuss, and think about can contribute to the effectiveness of what they write.

Six Basic Factors

Successful writing of compositions results from a combination of perhaps six basic factors: motivation (method of assignment), frequency and length of the writing projects, proofreading by the student, evaluating of papers by both teacher and student, the revision or rewriting of the assignment, and the reward or recognition for finished compositions. All steps require careful preplanning, creative imagination, and intelligent guidance on the part of the teacher.

The Assignment

In studying composition texts, the committee noted with horror that the writing of letters was taught (and retaught and retaught) for some 12 years, apparently (and deservedly) with little success. What could be duller than writing a letter which will never be mailed to a person who will never see it, or penning a little gem asking Mom and Pop to come to the PTA next Thursday when they'll be seen every day until then.

Please don't think we're against letter writing. There may be, however, genuine letters to write—letters to editors, to speakers, to friends in the hospital—not phonies, and not frequently every year for 12 years!

This is primarily a problem of subject matter, of what to assign. Vital issues are discussed every day on the playground or campus, in the homes and in the papers. The pupil or student has convictions in these matters which he wants to be able to express persuasively. For the younger children, the assignment might arise out of a discussion of "When should you hit back?" or "When should you tell the teacher?" Older students might be involved currently in the move to eliminate a local 3.2 beer joint, traffic safety after a bad accident involving one of them, even life and immortality after some occurrence has involved their thinking of these things. The teacher needs courage to stimulate and direct vital discussions, yet to stop them in time to channel what's waiting to be said into the writing of individual papers. Only once in a blue moon might someone possibly be interested in writing "What I Did on My Vacation."

What can the teacher do to bring these vital discussions into the classroom? If you know what's being discussed, ask the students what they think; read some similar problem portrayed in a story and ask them what they'd have done; assign problem stories to the older students to be read. Then ask, what should they have done? What would you have done?

Themes may also be suggested by partial sentences suggesting emotion, "I get furious when . . ." "I'd like a change . . ." "My favorite daydream . . ." "Who will I be ten years from today? . . ."

As the student matures, his subjects will more often grow out of discussions that follow challenging reading assignments, for reading is life experience also. Again the questions: Was that right? What would you have done? Was there any way out? What is honor?

Motivation

Point one in motivation seems to be that good motivation comes out of meaningful and spirited discussion, out of argument, out of the student's experience, which includes the rich experience of reading. Motivation does not come out of a title, or a choice of three titles, written on the chalkboard by the teacher. After the discussion, the teacher might well write several points of view from which the student might handle his topic.

Length of Assignment

Important as motivation is, the most probable reason that students can't write is that students haven't written. The best, the only way to learn to write is by writing. Most consultants agree that the millennium is a paper a week of a length not too burdensome for the age level and the subject matter. Frequent short papers are more productive of skill than infrequent long ones. For high school students, the optimum length is 150 to 500 words. The research paper (no more than one at most in high school; that assigned, if at all, during the senior year, and no longer than 1,000 to 1,500 words) is no longer considered a must. Some authorities feel the research paper should not be assigned at all in high school. Certainly longer papers

tend to invite the inclusion of great gobs of poorly digested, almost plagiarized material.

What about pressure from other departments of the high school who wish to assign research papers earlier, and who charge you with failure because the students haven't learned how to do them in their English classes?

Do what you can to convince them that it is in the student's interest that all classes, whether history, science, geography, French or whatever, also postpone formal research papers until the senior year, and that it is further in the student's best interest that such papers be short.

Perhaps you might even show them this booklet!

Frequency of Assignment

How can you assign a paper a week? Often you can't. One suggestion for the teacher who is burdened with many composition papers is to stagger due dates for assignments so that papers come in to the teacher every other day. Even with six classes, the teacher would then be able to assign each student a paper every other week; this is, alas, far more writing experience than most students have now. Nor should composition be ignored in the so-called "lit" classes.

In Class or Outside?

How and where is the actual writing done?

Theme writing should be done *both* in class and outside. The teacher's function, when the student is writing in class, is to help the student *express his own ideas*. This is done by large doses of encouragement: "Of course you can write it. You can *say* it!" and by skillful questioning that helps the student to focus on what he *does* think. The teacher can also suggest the possibility of source material. We must all be aware, however, that students do not develop skill in composition until they can express their own ideas without constant and frequent consultation to ask for teacher's opinion and approval.

Authorities differ on the proportion of writing that should be done in class and outside. Successful teaching of composition must, certainly, include both.

The Actual Writing

In the actual writing of the assignment, we have seen that the teacher gives the student a purpose for writing, stimulates him to want to write and lets the writing lead purposefully out of animated, even heated, class discussion. The ideal point at which to start writing is that point at which every hand in the room is raised to express an opinion and nobody has the floor.

Of course, after a number of guided assignments, the students will be relieved to have a free assignment —any subject goes!

A teacher must help students to acquire the habit of getting ideas down on paper first—without self-consciousness as to form or audience. *The idea!* That's the thing as all professional writers know. Form follows function. Get the idea down on paper, whether in jotted notations, sentences, or a long pouring-out. This must be done creatively; not until the idea is caught on paper is the student ready to do his critical thinking. Critical thinking applied too soon to a paper will strangle spontaneity and original thinking.

Then the teacher can help again. Is there one good idea here or many? What is the logical point of beginning? The conclusion? Does the material flow in orderly sequence? Is there any extraneous material to remove? Are there sections with unneeded words, phrases or sentences, others too thin?

Proofreading

Before the student hands in his paper, he should proofread it for careless mistakes, run-on sentences, faulty punctuation and form, etc. Until this becomes habitual, the first ten minutes of class time could profitably be spent this way on the day the theme comes in.

Remember. We are hoping to develop students who can write clearly, forcefully, and easily about something of importance, students who can find and correct their mistakes independently before the papers leave their hands!

Truly, our purpose is NOT to develop students who can diagram, who can fill in blanks with the proper word, or who can guess what to do to please the teacher.

Evaluating (not correcting) the Theme

When the student has done his best, the teacher must evaluate the paper for him and occasionally in conference with him. Here lies a grave pitfall. There are often so many errors in grammar or form that, were they all marked, the paper would go back to the student with a veritable measles of red penciling, almost none of which refers to the paramount consideration—has he written well about something worthwhile?

Why do teachers mark compositions?

The answer is not simple, but it ought to be—**to teach students to write better.**

Why do students look at teachers' marks?

That answer too is simple. "How did I do?" Usually he means, "What was my grade?" Somehow we must inspire him to want to see also "Am I improving?"

Endless teacher time is wasted because composition teachers do not keep the overall purpose of composition and the purpose of this particular assignment in mind while they grade, and also because they forget that countless red marks do not add up to teaching of writing.

Marking everything which can be improved in a theme leads to a bewildered, frustrated student who feels that somehow this theme has become the battleground where dear old teacher obviously bled copiously for him. He is a little ashamed to try again.

Each time a teacher grades a set of papers, he might well ask himself, What marks will teach this student the writing principles which were the purpose of this assignment?

Papers containing obviously careless errors should be returned unmarked. The student should be required to apply his knowledge. A teacher is not and must not be editor or proofreader, but teacher.

Early in their work together, teacher and pupils must agree that written experience is valuable, that there must be many opportunities to practice writing, and that, while the communication of ideas is most important, correct form is a valuable tool; no one misunderstands us when we say "ain't," but people do draw impressions of us we may not wish to convey.

How About Grammar?

Without some instruction in the tools of writing, even the student who writes a great deal may take a long time to reach competence. On the other hand, a teacher who teaches language skills at great length may leave the student without time to write plus a great aversion to the whole process. This is the greater danger, certainly. A student who had shown much promise in his writing during freshman English was asked the following year, "How is the writing coming?" "Oh, I do not have time to write this semester. I am taking composition." And, indeed, he was—a workbook full of blanks, a veritable science of diagrams to master.

It cannot be recommended frequently enough that *the study of grammer rises out of—i.e., follows—the living, dynamic assignment.* While many people feel the drill cannot be eliminated, it never has meaning unless it is based on a problem encountered in the communication of ideas. How sad, and how true, that we as teachers cannot produce students skilled in composition while we hide in the security of the grammar workbook instead of turning our mavericks loose in the frighteningly wide-open spaces of the blank sheets of paper.

Content First

The content of the theme should receive most of the teacher's attention. It is very easy for the teacher to hold to the security of marking mechanics rather than to try to decide whether or not the student has said something of value, with some originality, some thought, and some fairly logical order in a theme largely free from generalizations and unsupported abstractions. Does the student have an introduction, a body and a conclusion—an introduction which lets us know what he is trying to do, and a conclusion that lets us know how he finally feels about the endeavor? You will not find many qualifying words above. Striving for perfection can make composition a horrendous affair.

Suggestions for marking student papers:

1. Compliment the student's work wherever and whenever possible (and sometimes when it is highly far-fetched)! Any comment, written or oral, should indicate respect for the student's work. (This rules out witty sarcasm, alas!)

2. Make your comments direct and personal; set up a marginal dialogue with the student. Highly generalized suggestions such as "Make this more entertaining, or more clear, or more specific or effective," result only in a baffled student. Try more exact comments: "Can you give an example from your own experience?" "Can you explain this in terms that someone untrained in your subject would understand?" "Can you find an authority to quote on this point?"

3. Unless you are working with an advanced student on the highest grade levels, do not try to mark every error on every paper! If a parent or colleague catches unmarked errors, remind him that your purpose in evaluating a paper is to encourage a student to write well, willingly and easily and to learn a few things at a time—not to parade your recognition of errors. Tell your students what you are doing and why.

4. Many people like the time-saving practice of using symbols for common mechanical errors. Several cautions are pertinent here. First of all, any list of common errors is long, but the length of the list does not mean it is more important than content considerations. There are many errors in grammar, but few basic principles of clear, competent prose; vital and forceful expression is more important than mere correctness. If marking symbols are used, they should be put in the margin rather than in the body of the composition. This forces the student to think about his corrections.

Remember: Terms are one's aid in learning to write well. Fancy vocabularies to describe grammar, types of composition, and parts of compositions exist in great numbers. If the teacher understands them, well and good, but many of them should not even be passed to the student, let alone required to be memorized. Moreover, any system of nomenclature which is not widely used should show very special value before being taught to students in this mobile day and age where a school is fortunate to have students two or three years in a row before they go somewhere else.

It is also extremely important that the school agree on any terms or symbols used so that a student does not have to learn a whole new system each time he changes teachers.

If the student tallies his errors on a correction sheet occasionally, it gives him a graphic presentation of his problems. Teachers occasionally use only

a small marginal "x" indicating that there is some kind of error—spelling, punctuation, reference, or other—in that line. Your marking on a paper must help the student think out his problem—not give him the answer.

5. Give themes some kind of evaluations; students want it. Some teachers do not use a letter grade. Others do. The teacher must strive to encourage the student who is thinking well and originally to persevere, even though his mechanics would make his grade a sad one. The teacher must also show the good little girl who never misplaces a comma that something to say is important too.

6. Return papers quickly with a meaningful evaluation. (Failure to return papers quickly is a drawback of the lay-reader program.)

7. Be amenable to student disagreement with you. Your goal should be to help him to express what *he* means. You must help him to think and to support *his* conclusions. This will help him to mature more than his parroting your point of view.

8. Relate the paper being marked to previous composition work and to the writing assignments which are to follow. "You seem to have mastered the use of the quotation mark here, but we will need to get after the run-on sentence!" Or, "You have done a good job of attacking an idea here; perhaps next you can find one you would like to defend."

Remember, in evaluating the paper that we, as teachers, are concerned with applied grammar—grammar applied not to a workbook but to written composition. Refer frequently to the section on objectives or delineate your own. Work out such a list with your students. Of course, teachers wonder just what their group should know and should concentrate on next. A skill may be introduced appropriately where the need for it is shown. The work of the class will indicate what skills seem to need immediate emphasis, re-emphasis or merely a word or two in private conference with individuals. No class will be at the same point as another class the same age. One student may be baffled by the capital while his classmate is weeding out dangling modifiers; reference to the sequential list of skills in this monograph will be of assistance (Chapter Two).

Student's Correction or Revision

Once the teacher has given the paper a positive evaluation emphasizing content and noting technical errors with good judgment, he is ready for the follow-up steps when the student gets the evaluated paper back.

Some correction or revision of the paper by the student is vital. Perhaps it may consist of a correction of errors in a few words, sentences, or paragraphs on the back of the page facing the original. Occasionally, there are serious defects in structure and thinking which require rewriting. It is well to remember, however, that there is a limited amount of skill which a student can glean from the revision of the same paper. When the point of little gain is reached—off to a new paper.

The student may be motivated to correct his papers in several ways. He may be reminded that this is the point at which he is getting individual instruction to *his* needs. Some teachers withhold the recording of *any* grade for the entire paper until the revision is in and acceptable. The drawback here is that if the grade is low to begin with, the student may not see the value in getting it recorded, and he who needs help the most will get the least. Many teachers prefer to give an additional grade for correction, the grade being reduced each time the paper is returned as unsatisfactory. In this method, a student could have a paper with a low grade, but receive an encouraging grade on error correction.

Follow-up

Use the composition assignment as the basis for a class instruction period the day the papers are returned.

Select a number of faulty and unusually good sentences, paragraphs, titles, or ideas from the students' papers; present them anonymously at the chalk board, orally, or on mimeographed sheets. This is the best basis for a "grammar" lesson as well as for a deepening awareness of good style. Never underestimate the power of peer evaluation.

In fact, until there has been a composition assignment, you have no realistic basis for a grammar lesson.

Keep the students aware that they are following a plan and what it is hoped this plan can do for them.

Recognition

Students must receive recognition. This recognition may be of many kinds. The teacher or one of the students should read aloud some of the best papers. Good themes may be collected into a class scrapbook. One high school sends the best theme from each member of a composition class to the bindery each year with the books for rebinding, and these volumes are kept in the high school library. Such a book might be mimeographed for students. Students can enter contests in school or outside receiving recognition if not a prize. Other classes might be invited to hear the outstanding papers. The teacher might occasionally see that a good paper gets to the school paper or magazine. Good papers can be posted on the bulletin board. Certainly each student should be encouraged to keep a collection of his papers in a folder or notebook. This is a record not only of his thinking, but also of his progress. Students may be divided into small groups to read and discuss one another's papers. Each group might choose a paper to read aloud and so on.

Summary

No step should be consistently neglected in any class; a weakness in any skill is insufficient excuse for postponing the next dynamic writing experience. Too often in the past, compositions have been devices the teacher could view with sufficient alarm to send the class back to filling in blanks in a workbook for another six weeks with the hope that if a child filled in "I have (gone)" a sufficient number of times, he would not write "I have went" in the next composition.

Teaching composition is an art—a fine balance between no discussion and too much discussion, no direction and too much, no corrections and too many, no models and too many. Pupils can study models of previously written themes; they can study models written by the literary great; models of work from his peers may not bring out his best, but models from his superiors may strangle his impulse to write at all when he is so obviously outdistanced.

Encourage the student to realize the subject may have been handled before and handled often, but the only really new thing in the world is the complex personality of the individual. He and he alone can add the flavor of his own inheritance, his own environment, and his own personality to his communication.

Remember, do as much *teaching* of composition as possible.

We hope these pages will help you to do just that.

CHAPTER TWO:

When?

. . . . *to teach composition skills.*

Other chapters of this publication are concerned with the *attitudes* of teacher and student which must exist before good writing can be achieved and with the *concepts* of language, rhetoric, and communication which state the skills essential to successful composition.

This chapter is concerned with the *practice* of composition—with the *application* at each level of appropriate rhetorical concepts and linguistic tools. Explicit references are frequently given in the pages which follow to Chapters One and Three. More important, this chapter assumes throughout that the teacher will consistently apply *at every stage* the procedure suggested for arousing interest and purpose and for evaluating compositions and that the student will master to an appropriate degree at each stage the objective skills outlined in Chapter Three.

The Sequence of Skills

The notion of this sequence is quite simply that the pupil is asked first to master a particular kind of writing technique in its simplest possible form. At the next stage he and the teacher are asked to use the skill previously acquired as the basis for a more complex and advanced writing activity. He and the teacher continue at each stage to build upon the skills which have been mastered earlier.

For convenience, the processes of writing have been analyzed and presented in the smallest possible units. Again for convenience, the analysis has been stated in the conventional and familiar terms of description, narration, exposition and evaluation (the latter being both broader and more exact than the usual term argument). It needs to be kept in mind, however, that though these divisions are useful they are unreal. Even at the simplest level, description must include evaluation, exposition, and narration. At higher stages of evaluation, again, any single piece of writing will require all the other forms.

Rhetorical Purpose in Assignments

For specific writing assignments, the teacher will always find that presenting a composition assignment to the students in terms of *communication* is both more valid and more useful than presenting it as *process*. The teacher should be thinking in terms of the specific skill to be achieved by a specific assignment; the student should be thinking rather of the communication to be achieved with his reader.

In terms of purpose, we can think of writing as Scientific (presenting the facts), as Dialectical (trying to find the truth), as Rhetorical (attempting to influence the reader), or as Literary (trying to entertain). Such a division makes clear what was stated above—that any individual piece of writing will require more than one form. (See Chapter One—Six Basic Factors.)

The Nature of the Sequence

As a simple example of the kind of sequential development of skills envisaged, let us use *description of a person*. During the first stage, the pupil is asked to tell what someone looks like; in doing this he is expected to achieve an adequate vocabulary, a clear physical point of view, and a clear sequence of physical details. At the second stage he is expected to add to these the ability to state character traits and characteristic behavior, as well as to state his own response. The third stage requires the beginning of character analysis, in which appearance, behavior, attitudes, and responses of others are presented in such a way that a clear understanding of character traits is produced in the reader. At the fourth stage the character sketch might be used as part of a large unit—as an element in creative writing or as a part of a political argument. The skills developed in this sequential fashion should then be available to the mature writer for use, as an example, in a library paper as a major or subordinate element in a study of Michaelangelo or George Washington or Al Capone.

Adapting to the Individual

Obviously, the skills of composition will not in practice be learned in a sequence as simple and mechanical as the paragraph above suggests; for example, the first grader will most naturally suggest what a person is like as well as what he looks like. What is emphasized here is that learning to write effective physical description is a simpler skill than character analysis and is basic to the latter.

What is suggested here is that the teacher make sure that the different skills in writing are consciously

taught in an appropriate sequence and at proper stages. It is not suggested that writing activities should be *limited* simply because a subject which excites the interest of the children seems to belong to a later stage.

Individuals and whole classes will obviously need to be taught or retaught processes and skills suggested for earlier stages. But the parallel structure used for each stage should make this relatively simple. The important thing is that the teacher at every level should recognize the need not to *do* the work of later stages but to lay the *foundations* for that work.

Other attitudes are also essential. Children should never be held back from the practice of a writing activity simply because it is suggested for a later stage. Whenever a skill is mastered the individual or the class should go on to the practice of a later stage of the sequence. We know from reading actual compositions that children in the first grade can master most of the writing skills suggested for the first six grades in this publication—and that more specific composition activities should be assigned in lower grades.

Applications

Every child in every grade should write frequently; students learn more from several short papers than from a single long one; and a skill cannot be mastered from one assignment. In what follows, frequently only a single assignment is suggested (as a help to the teacher in developing his own assignments) but clearly more than one writing practice is needed before the child can master the skill. Remember that the same writing *problem* can be presented in many different guises and with more than one *purpose* for the writer; surprise and change create interest and challenge.

Formulating the Question

Perhaps the best way of making sure that the writer communicates clearly and with a purpose is to make sure that the composition is a single, coherent answer to a question. In the beginning, perhaps, the questions can be those asked by the teacher as is suggested by the form in most of the sample topics given below.

As the child develops his skills he should be led to formulate his own questions: What is this object? How does it affect me? What kind of effect do I want to produce on my reader? How can I produce this effect? As he undertakes more complicated and difficult subjects the child will need to be taught that each major question requires subordinate questions. How trees grow requires that the writer answer such questions as: What is photosynthesis? How does the sap rise? What constituents do the roots take from the soil?

We might even make the sweeping assertion that *all* good writing, whether factual, fictional, or poetic, essentially consists of answers to questions about appearance, behavior, feelings, and ideas. If the writer establishes the habit of formulating and examining questions he will have learned the basic principles of unity and coherence.

Grading With a Purpose

The grading and evaluation of a theme should be in terms of the rhetorical purpose of the teacher; not all compositions need to be graded completely. If the writer understands in terms of the skill to be acquired by the assignment why he has succeeded or failed, the teaching process is successful. As was said in Chapter One, the teacher all too often tends to proofread for the student and to cover the paper with red marks which obscure the central question of whether the writer has succeeded or failed in communicating with the reader.

Curriculum Suggestions

What follows is not intended as an explicit writing curriculum but as a guide to the curriculum which the individual or the system should develop, which will of course include the other language arts in an integrated program.

STAGE ONE: KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADE THREE

DESCRIPTION:

1. Observing accurately and completely, with full use of the senses: How big was the steam engine? What is the shape of the guard? How many wheels does it have? Are they all the same size? What does the engine sound like? What kind of noises do the wheels make? How does the steam engine smell? (Or the bus, or the fire engine, or the diesel, or the rodeo, or the big tractor.)

2. Acquiring and using adequate vocabulary.

   a. Using the existing vocabulary with precision and force: (See The Qualities of Words p. 19.) Are the fittings on the fire engine bright? or shiny? or glittering? Do the locomotive wheels thump? or bang? or click? or rattle?

   b. Adding new words, with the help of other children and the teacher, which will aid in expressing accurately what was perceived. The kitten's fur is soft; it is also fluffy and silky. The Christmas tree ornaments shine; they can also be described as glittering, and silvery or gold-colored, and fragile.

   c. Selecting words which express most accurately the feelings of the writer: (See The Qualities of Words p. 19.) Did the boys fight hard? or angrily? or bitterly? or sportingly? Is the kitten simply soft, or must we add cuddly and gentle to complete the description?

   d. Using the possibilities of simple figurative language: (See The Qualities of Words, p. 19.) How did the lion's roar sound? Was it as loud as the sound of a big truck? Was riding the new bicycle as easy as going down the slide at school? Is having a theme read aloud to

the class as scary as jumping from the tower at the swimming pool? (Objects brought to class for oral demonstrations—show and tell activities—furnish excellent subjects for written descriptions. Short field trips, expeditions to various local places of interest or even simple walks not only enlarge the whole experience of the children and increase their vocabularies but furnish many subjects for writing.)

3. Learning to write with a purpose by first determining the writer's own response to the situation.

a. Deciding whether an object or person is pleasing, unpleasing, ugly, pretty, exciting, dangerous. (See The Qualities of Paragraphs, p. 20.)

b. Learning to state the chief impression in a single word or sentence, so that the writer begins to understand that he must know what effect he wants to have on the reader before he begins to write.

NARRATION:

1. Finding the significance of an experience before attempting to decide what needs to be told: (See The Qualities of the Composition as a Whole, p. 20.) Was the trip to the zoo significant because we had fun? Or because we learned something? Or because we saw a giraffe for the first time?

2. Learning to determine the central or most important episode in the total experience before beginning to write: Was the central discovery that animals are like people? Or that animals come in all shapes and sizes? Or that snakes are scary?

3. Determining the proper beginning and ending in terms of the central and most important episode: Do we begin telling about the trip to the fire station with the first mention of it in class? Or with getting on the bus to go? Or with the first sight of the fire engine itself?

4. Omitting irrelevant episodes and details by using the guidance of the central episode: Do we need to tell about buying tickets? Or getting a cold drink?

5. Using description purposefully in narration and learning to make the experience come alive for the reader: (See The Qualities of Paragraphs, p. 20.) What did the fire hose look and feel like? What was it like to sit in the driver's seat? What did the bell sound like?

EXPOSITION:

1. Explaining with a purpose.

a. Asking and answering questions: How would we report a fire? Where is the nearest mail box? How do we get to it?
b. Giving directions: How do we address a letter? How do we paint with water colors? What are the rules for playing checkers? How can we tell time? How do we add fractions?
c. Telling how something works: How does an harmonica work? What does a color wheel show? Why does a compass show us directions?

2. Defining words and classes of things: What is the difference between a hop, a jump, and a skip? What is a pet? How is a pet different from a farm animal?

3. Telling why: Why is it better to stand in line for the slide than to fight to be first? Why should we be quiet when the teacher is reading aloud? Why do we want to learn to read? Why does a letter need to have a complete address?

STAGE TWO: GRADES FOUR THROUGH SIX

DESCRIPTION—PHYSICAL:

1. Recognizing that we can examine an object from more than one point of view, and selecting the best angle from which to describe it.

2. Learning to recognize the relation of the various parts of the object to be described: The parts of a sailboat; the pieces of a working engine; the objects in a classroom.

3. Maintaining a logical sequence of the parts, from front to back or top to bottom in describing a car, not wheelcovers, upholstery, spare tire, steering wheel.

DESCRIPTION—NON-PHYSICAL:

1. Stating states of mind and attitudes and achieving an adequate vocabulary.

2. Developing the use of figurative language to explain feelings: I was as happy as a singing canary; he was as welcome as the postman.

NARRATION:

1. Using beginnings which contain necessary or useful expositions: Why did Johnny and I cross the forbidden river to explore the other side? What was the misunderstanding which made Jack and Jim start a fight?

2. Introducing characterization: Jack was quick to take offense; Jim always wanted to be boss; Johnny always wanted to do what was forbidden.

3. Understanding that every narrative has some type of climax or high point or turning point. (See Narration—Plot p. 22.)

4. Telling the story so that it has a dramatic or surprise ending.

EXPOSITION:

1. Analyzing a process using concrete descriptions of physical objects: How does one sail a boat? How can we make a poster which will cause our parents to want to come to our exhibit? How does one make fudge? How do we put valuable stamps in an album?

a. Describing an object clearly before telling how it works.
b. Observing proper order in giving directions.
c. Explaining clearly the purpose of the whole process.

2. Analyzing a process not involving physical objects: How to study; how to run a winning race; how our 4H Club operates.
   a. Stating the purpose—the end product or situation.
   b. Describing people, materials, activities—the means to the end.
   c. Describing the activity involved in reaching the end—the narrative steps.

3. Defining and explaining: (See The Qualities of Sentences p. 19.) What is science? What is a fair contest? What kinds of jobs can I do now? What careers will eventually be open to me?
   a. Selecting the proper methods of definition and explanation.
   b. Using details, examples, authority, etc., as support.

EVALUATION:

1. Making and supporting judgments: Should we make new rules about the use of bicycles? Should we enter the model car contest? Should we help another student with his test?

2. Reporting personal reactions to books, movies, TV. Why did I like *King of the Wind*? Are movies more interesting than TV? Is Tom better than Huck?

STAGE THREE: GRADES SEVEN AND EIGHT

DESCRIPTION AND NARRATION:

1. Preparing a character sketch; mental and physical states.
   a. Evaluating the character: What kind of person? What is the writer's response to this person? What does he want the reader to think of him?
   b. Selecting the appearance, activities, attitudes which will support the evaluation and produce the desired effect on the reader.
   c. Developing an effective introduction and conclusion; learning to examine alternative beginnings and endings.
   d. Deciding whether to "tell about" or "present" the character.

2. Describing groups and their activities: The class involved in an art project; the behavior of a crowd at a football game; the state legislature in action; a school field day.
   a. Learning to look for and present a dominant impression: What is the overall and most important aspect of the situation? Which other elements should be subordinated?
   b. Describing the physical characteristics which will support the dominant impression.
   c. Determining what activities can be narrated which will support it: Should these be group activities or representative individual actions?
   d. Using necessary transitional devices.

3. The narrative report or summary.
   a. Beginning the use of source material, using a single source (first the textbook itself, then magazines or encyclopedia articles, then the full length book) and involving selection of the climactic event, and determination of what subordinate events must be related to make the climactic event clear: What caused the Boston Tea Party? How did people react to the Pearl Harbor attack? What happened at the first airplane flight? How does a piece of Argentine leather get to the Denver Dry Goods in the form of a leather handbag?
   b. Writing summaries or precis: Reduce ten pages in a magazine on the launching of the first space vehicle to one page, without omitting any *essential* event.
      (1) Learning to restate another's ideas in one's own words.
      (2) Distinguishing between quotation and paraphrase.
      (3) Acknowledging informally borrowed ideas and facts as well as quotation. (Emphatically, the time is not ripe for formal footnotes and bibliographies; informal acknowledgement in the body of the text or in the heading is completely adequate here; but scrupulous use of quotation marks cannot be overemphasized.)

EXPOSITION AND EVALUATION:

1. Learning to word questions in a forceful and functional way.
   a. Asking questions about the subject, the purpose, and the audience before beginning to write.
   b. Focusing attention on the three basic elements in any writing situation: The writer and his attitudes; the subject and what is interesting in it; the reader, his knowledge of the subject, his interest in it, and the possible value to him of communication about the subject.

2. Analyzing a process or activity.
   a. Changing from the "how to" exposition of fudge-making and boat-sailing to the "what is?" "why is?" analysis: Why did Pasteur discover bacteria? What is the nature of bacterial activity? Why did Washington cross the Delaware?
   b. Analyzing the initial situation or problem as well as the final result.
   c. Relating the analysis to the reader: What exactly do we want him to understand? Why do we want him to understand it?

3. Using consciously different methods of exposition (not yet as means of developing individual paragraphs —to be used in next stage) each to be practiced as the principal method of writing a short theme.
   a. Defining: To what class of things does a sailboat, a steam locomotive, a teacher, a scoutmaster, a junior high school belong? How does this particular thing or person differ from other members of its class?
   b. Classifying: How many classes of things are there within a general subject? What is the

logical way to divide the subject? Means of transportation might be classified as automobiles, ships, airplanes. The technique of classification requires that all things falling within the general subject or term be included in the classes under it. We must include trains and other classes in order to complete the analysis.

c. Noting details: What elements are required for a successful theme? What makes up an automobile? What are the requirements for a stereo phonograph?

d. Writing examples, illustrations, anecdotes: How a drowning person feels is illustrated by what went through my mind last summer at the lake; the way people feel about tramps is shown by the anecdote telling how my mother hired a tramp to clean up the yard.

e. Determining cause and effect: What causes snow? Why did our team win the contest?

f. Making comparisons and contrasts: What is the difference between a short story and a play? How is junior high different from grade school? Which is the best car?

4. Analyzing historical and social events.

a. Noting causes of historical events: Why did the Boston Tea Party occur? Why did Castro gain power in Cuba?

b. Determining the reasons for group behavior: What made a group of students break windows in the school building?

c. Writing about the family and the group: Are parents people? Is a young person justified in disobeying his parents? Should we report it when our group does something wrong?

5. Understanding that successful evaluative writing has clear requirements, regardless of its type.

a. Establishing clear criteria—for morality, for success as a salesman, for fairness.

b. Applying these criteria to the specific case, situation, person, or work of art.

c. Presenting adequate evidence or argument that the subject meets or does not meet the criteria.

STAGE FOUR: GRADE NINE

Recognition of Individual Differences

At every level, but perhaps particularly at this level, successful teaching requires adjustment to the varying interests, achievements, and intelligence of the individual students. It can be emphasized here again that some students will have already acquired composition skills suggested for more advanced stages and that others will still need instruction suggested for earlier stages.

Large schools may make some provision for individual differences by using different tracks, according to levels of achievement in English. It is equally important that teachers in smaller schools provide for individual differences through flexibility in assigning subjects and lengths. It should be obvious that when a subject exciting to a class emerges from general discussion, a whole group of sub-topics can be suggested by the teacher, so that while one student is still painfully practicing clear explanations of "how to do," another student in the same class may be working on advanced evaluation. For example, reading *The Good Earth* and discovering that Pearl Buck is a Nobel Prize winner might lead one student to a narrative report about the establishment of the Nobel Prizes, another to an exposition of the methods of selecting a winner, and still a third to a critical evaluation of the literary qualities which led to her selection. Certainly the good teacher of composition can select and assign topics in such a fashion that each student is led to practice those rhetorical skills which he has not yet mastered.

Different Kinds of Differences

How many kinds of differences are there? In ability, of course! But one student may, as a result of the mobility of our population, have received practically no instruction in composition while another of the same ability may have had thorough and successful training. Some will have acquired habits of correctness while others need emphasis on elementary tools of composition such as grammatical correctness, punctuation, spelling, diction.

Some students in any high school are terminal—either because of ability or because of choice. Yet these students who are terminal may be socially more mature than college-bound students, and may respond to subjects that require experience and mature thought. Their interests can be more concrete and more adult.

Whatever the ability levels or the goals, all students should take twelve years of English, including composition in every year. And the writing, of whatever nature, should be motivated. The class situation should always be one in which the importance of communicating clearly and correctly is self-evident.

An often-repeated idea may again be repeated here: a student who writes incorrectly will, with rare exceptions, have had already as much instruction in punctuation, spelling, and mechanics as the student who writes correctly. Repetition of drill work is almost certainly *not* what he needs. Rather, motivation —whether by the nature of the writing subjects assigned or by the standards required by the teacher—will be the key to writing success.

Varied Programs

In the outline below the possibilities for varying the program to suit individual needs is barely touched upon. As a suggestion, two different programs are given for grade nine; the first is presented as suggestive for students with sub-standard preparation, lower ability, or with plans to terminate their education with a high-school diploma; the second is thought of as appropriate for college-bound students.

But two plans do not exhaust the possibilities, and more than one plan will be needed for subsequent

grades. Again, the *kinds* of rhetorical skills needed are essentially the same for all students. Remember that what is suggested for plan one often applies to plan two, and vice-versa.

Motivation

Lengthy papers are likely to be a hinderance to good motivation for students with problems or limited skills. Perhaps no paper should be over 350 words, but the assignments should be thought of in terms of the results to be achieved rather than the words to be written. They should have immediate purpose and meaning, and revisions should be required in terms of failure to communicate to the intended reader, not as routine requirements to satisfy a cranky teacher.

—PLAN ONE

DESCRIPTION AND NARRATION:

1. Reporting what has happened to interested members of the group.
   a. Making records of activities: minutes, reports.
   b. Writing directions for participation in contests.
   c. Sharing personal experiences with others: What happened at the drag race? How did the first day at work go? How did it feel to be a member of a winning team?
2. Reporting on job activities: What does one do as a filling station attendant? As a retail clerk? As a worker in a plastics factory? How does one go about getting a job? What questions are asked and how should they be answered? What should one's behavior be if he wants to keep the job?
3. Reporting from people around us: What did the local filling station owner tell us about the operations of his station? What arguments did the recruiting officer give for joining the army? What does my best friend tell me about the advantages of joining the Air Force? What advantages are there in joining the WAVES?
4. Achieving a working vocabulary.
   a. Expecting the student to learn and use correctly the new vocabulary required as he works with new subjects.
   b. Emphasizing vocabulary as a means to an end, not an end in itself. Placing focus on the precise and right word which will communicate correctly and possess the right connotations.
   c. Avoiding the fault of "big words"—large, imprecise terms used for the effect on the reader rather than because they mean precisely what the writer means.
   d. Increasing the ability to use vivid figurative language. (The terminal student often has a real-life experience which will allow him, if encouraged, to develop stronger figurative language than the often more literary and immature college-bound student.)

EXPOSITION AND EVALUATION:

1. Stating and analyzing the facts.
   a. Explaining what the facts are: What must the team do to keep in good condition? What is the strength of our team? What are the opportunities for girls in business?
   b. Analyzing the facts: Is our team actually in good condition? Are we likely to win this season? What are the disadvantages of being a working wife?
2. Analyzing activities: How do you make a bookcase in woodshop? What tools are needed to wire a phonograph amplifier?
3. Giving directions: How do you pour a set of concrete steps? (Is the explanation clear enough for the writer to be foreman on the job?)
4. Interviewing: Getting proper information; arranging information in intelligible order.
5. Evaluating one's own self.
   a. Analyzing the self, recognizing the personal factors involved in making a decision, weighing motivation: What personality traits should I look for in choosing a marriage partner? Will I raise my children as my parents raised me? Is early marriage desirable? What is involved in going steady? How can I choose the best job for me?
   b. Relating the personal present and future: What would I like my life to be ten years from now? Am I headed that way? How can I upgrade myself in my job?
6. Studying problems outside the individual: How can the cafeteria service be improved? What is wrong with present traffic laws?
   a. Stating the problem clearly and accurately.
   b. Determining the purpose of the analysis.
   c. Selecting appropriate details and methods of presenting these details.
   d. Evaluating the attitudes of the reader and presenting the material in such a way that the writer's purpose is achieved.
7. Writing a source report.
   a. Reading and restating complicated directions: How does one set up a home shop? How do we go about tuning a motor? How should one plan an engagement party?
   b. Finding and stating facts needed for a given job: What are desirable shrubs for foundation planting? What are the advantages and how does one keep up a perpetual inventory?

—PLAN TWO

DESCRIPTION:

1. Writing objective descriptions.
   a. Learning to include all of the elements of the object or situation.
   b. Learning to distinguish between the actuality and what the writer thinks about it, and avoiding judgment.
   c. Using sufficiently specific and concrete detail to make the perception clear to the reader.
   d. Employing description for a purpose: The cell in mitosis, the voting machine.
2. Writing impressionistic descriptions.
   a. Learning to focus on the writer's response to the object.

b. Selecting details to produce the desired effect.
c. Emphasizing conscious word selection for connotation.
d. Using figurative language creatively. (See The Qualities of Words, p. 19.)
e. Using effective sentence patterns. (See The Qualities of Sentences, p. 19.)

3. Learning to use a fundamental image.
a. Selecting a single, familiar object to relate the strange and new to what the reader already knows.
b. Relating all details as they are presented to the image.

4. Achieving a working vocabulary.
a. Expecting the student to learn and use correctly the new vocabulary required as he works with new subjects and new ideas.
b. Emphasizing vocabulary as a means to an end, not an end in itself. Focusing on the precise and right word which will communicate correctly and possess the right connotations.
c. Avoiding the fault of "big words"—large, imprecise terms used for the effect on the reader rather than because they mean precisely what the writer means.
d. Increasing the ability to use vivid figurative language.

NARRATION:

1. Using narration as accessory to exposition and evaluation.
a. Using illustration and anecdote.
b. Using narrative patterns in process exposition.

2. Developing creative narration for those with the desire to write it (provided basic elements have been taught in earlier writing assignments and in reading). (See Narration, p. 22-23.)

EXPOSITION:

1. Improving topic sentences and paragraph development. (See The Qualities of Paragraphs, p. 20.)
a. Using methods of expository development, taught in previous stage, for individual paragraph development, with focus on the conscious development by specific means of the clearly stated topic sentence.
b. Understanding the logic or thought processes involved in each of the methods.
c. Distinguishing between developmental paragraphs and structural paragraphs—introductory, transitional, summary, concluding.

2. Developing formal structure. (See The Qualities of the Composition as a Whole, p. 20.)
a. Using the two-stage sentence outline, with purpose statement, introduction, and conclusion. (Note: Correct paragraphing with the use of the topic sentence and outlining may be fruitfully associated with outlining by requiring each sentence of the outline to be used as the topic sentence of a paragraph. Outlining thus may be begun with Roman numerals only, leading to themes of three or four paragraphs. Two-level outline then will lead to longer papers, in which the sub-topics are topic sentences.)
b. Writing papers from outlines submitted and approved in advance.

3. Writing the expository report. (Note: Report papers at this stage should not exceed 500 words.)
a. Writing an expository report based on written sources, on interviews, or on personal observation: Why did our team lose the game it was supposed to win? What traffic hazards exist near the school? How is a presidential election conducted?
b. Using class and outside readings and work in other subjects for a rich variety of subjects at this stage: Is there life on other planets? What are some unusual occupations? Why was Pearl Buck selected a Nobel Prize winner? How was the turbine engine developed? How does the jury system operate? How was *Romeo and Juliet* first staged? Who are some of the famous actresses who played Juliet?
c. Making the focus of the expository report be on communicating with and informing other members of the class. (Note: It is almost always undesirable to assign all members of a class the same subject.)
d. Reporting accurately the source of the report, using correct notes based on personal interviews or correct summary notes from written sources, with careful distinction between paraphrase and quotation, and acknowledging the sources, whether written or not. (Note: The student should not be allowed to use material not his own without acknowledgment. Formal footnoting should be deferred until a later stage; informal acknowledgment is adequate at this level.) Selecting carefully the material to be included making sure that no material is included which does not clearly answer the question posed at the beginning.

EVALUATION:

1. Evaluating readings. (Note: The book report as a summary should not be used.)
a. Evaluating characters: Are the characters in *Swift Water* realistic? Would my friends and I behave in the same way?
b. Evaluating the themes of the readings: (See Narration—Theme, p. 23.) Is the desire to be needed the real subject of *Johnny Tremaine?*
c. Seeking answers to technical questions: Can Shakespeare's language really be understood by the members of this class? Does Shakespeare use too much figurative language? Would *Pride and Prejudice* attract more readers if it began in the middle of things instead of building up interest gradually?

2. Making personal and group evaluation.
a. Writing a career paper: Do I have the abilities and character traits needed for a successful doctor? Would I enjoy being a salesman? Can I meet the requirements for being an engineer?
b. Observing the behavior and attitudes of the group: Are high school students immoral? Are teachers fair to students? Are students fair to

teachers? What makes a good student? What makes a good teacher?

STAGE FIVE: GRADES TEN AND ELEVEN

The Focus

Consolidation, review, application, and sophistication are the keynotes for this stage. It should begin with a comprehensive testing of the rhetorical and language skills previously taught—*a testing not of whether the student can verbalize about physical and mental points of view, methods of paragraph development, outlining, etc., etc., but of whether he can actually use what he has been taught.*

Emphasizing Writing as Communication

No piece of writing can succeed if the writer does not consider the three elements involved—the writer himself and what he intends to accomplish; the subject or thing which he writes about, as distinct from what he plans to accomplish; and the reader or person who is to be informed, persuaded, or entertained.

Correctness

Clear understanding of the essentials of correct writing, including spelling, punctuation, capitalization, diction, and usage may need re-emphasis, but not re-instruction.

There should be habitual application to every piece of writing of appropriate standards of correctness. (Note: The teacher should realize that perfection is rarely attained even by adults and that rules of correctness, however the textbook may state them, are not absolute. Certainly, achieving mechanical correctness at the expense of subject matter and interest is wrong; it is equally wrong to allow brilliant ideas to excuse careless writing.)

Students at this level should be ready for full instruction in and be capable of responsible selection of appropriate levels of usage. (See Levels of Communication, p. 21.) Probably all of the writing should be kept at the informal level, although a few reports might be of such a nature and with such an audience that the formal level could be attempted. The teacher should keep in mind, however, that highly formal writing is infrequent in America in the mid-twentieth century.

DESCRIPTION AND NARRATION:

1. Using these skills as accessories to exposition and evaluation.
   a. Examining arguments for persuasive use of these.
   b. Using accessory description and narration at the sentence level.
2. Creative fiction and drama. (See Narration, p. 22-23.)

EXPOSITION AND EVALUATION:

1. Presenting a logically supported personal opinion paper about local situations—school editorials and news stories. (See The Qualities of the Composition as a Whole, p. 20.)
2. Evaluating experience: Movie and book reviews; self-analysis in terms of abilities and possibilities; job and leadership experiences.
   a. Selecting relevant details to support a given point of view.
   b. Recognizing the distinction between evidence logically sufficient to lead to an induction, and evidence used to illustrate how the induction was reached.
3. Evaluating situations beyond the school and personal level: Employment opportunities for students; segregation in the home town.
   a. Distinguishing facts from opinions. (See The Qualities of the Composition as a Whole, p. 20.)
   b. Distinguishing legitimate and informed opinion and judgment from hearsay and prejudice.
4. Writing a documented factual report: The percentage of Negroes in states which had Jim Crow laws; the actual procedures which led to the admission of Nigeria to the UN; facts about the UN bond issue; treatment of drunken drivers in our community.
   a. Finding the pertinent facts from a limited number of easily accessible sources—encyclopedias, yearbooks, magazine articles.
   b. Evaluating the reliability of sources and determining the most authoritative when there is conflict.
   c. Bringing together and organizing material from several sources.
   d. Narrowing questions sufficiently to permit full answers: A Stage Four expository report on the methods of selecting a Nobel Prize winner, based on a single source, might at this stage become a report on why Faulkner won the Nobel Prize. A Stage Four summary report on Elizabethan stage practices might lead here to different ways of staging Macbeth.
   e. Organizing materials through the use of the sentence outline.
   f. Limiting length—these reports should not be over 1,000 words.

STAGE SIX: GRADE TWELVE

CREATIVE NARRATION AND DESCRIPTION:

1. Writing the creative sketch.
   a. Describing and narrating human attitudes and behavior from a single, carefully-thought-out point of view, as they are manifested at a football game, a college entrance examination, a traffic jam, etc.
   b. Writing a fully developed character sketch.
2. Writing fiction: The single episode short story, involving adequate characterization, clear setting, climax, and employing conversation.
3. Writing a dramatic sketch, developing character and action by conversation.
4. Stressing certain elements in creative writing.
   a. Striving for total emotional effect on the reader.
   b. Recognizing that there is more than one way

to express a given idea or feeling.
c. Using appropriate sentence patterns, diction, figurative language.
d. Evaluating reader response, and rewriting.

EXPOSITION AND EVALUATION:

1. Analyzing (as distinguished from summarizing) stories, plays, and novels.
   a. Determining the author's purpose or theme.
   b. Noting the specific effects on the reader of the methods of characterization, arrangement of plot elements, point of view.

2. Analyzing complex human situations: The reactions of students to the honor system; class distinctions as they appear in schools, churches, businesses.

3. Writing a source paper, based on library materials, requiring the writer to find facts, evaluate and summarize conflicting opinions, select pertinent data from substantial amounts of material, and reach a clear and well-substantiated conclusion. Maximum length—1,500 words.

> The library source paper should *never* be assigned until the student has had many assignments and has established habitual skills in taking summary notes, in selecting pertinent facts and opinions and eliminating irrelevant materials, and in evaluating the relative worth of conflicting sources.
>
> If individuals have not attained these skills through writing the kinds of assignments suggested previously, then such limited papers should precede the library paper suggested above.

Most college English departments in Colorado feel that the high school library paper is usually not only a waste of time for the student but that it takes the place of far more valuable practice in using basic rhetorical skills. Under no circumstances should it replace frequent shorter papers.

All too often it is assigned without adequate preliminary training and written without proper supervision, so that it becomes an incoherent presentation of undigested, unorganized, and poorly written chunks of incompletely paraphrased source materials. Few high schools have libraries which permit bibliographical training, one of the important benefits of a library source paper.

Even when it is properly taught, all too often an excessive emphasis is given to bibliographical and footnote forms, when the chief emphasis should be on selection, organization, and clarity.

STAGE SEVEN: UPPER LEVEL TWELFTH GRADE, COLLEGE FRESHMEN

Rising Standards of Instruction

The preceding sequence of composition activities includes the skills—except for the library paper—which use bibliographical tools and materials normally available only in college libraries and currently expected of students by the end of the first year of college.

The steadily rising level of instruction in composition at the secondary and elementary levels leads to the conviction that before long practically all students will have mastered these skills before they leave secondary school. The increasing number of advanced placement programs—programs, let us emphasize, not incompatible with the nature of small high schools—should mean that many students will have completed their essential work in composition before beginning college.

Undoubtedly, for some time to come colleges will be forced to offer remedial courses in composition, courses which are remedial not in the present sense of covering elementary English fundamentals which are taught in junior high and the elementary grades, but in the sense of covering the rhetorical skills with which this monograph is concerned.

EXPOSITION AND EVALUATION:

1. Preparing the fully developed library paper.
   a. Formulating a question which cannot be answered in any single source: What weapons were developed as a result of Civil War experience? What is now known about the effects of atomic radiation on germ plasm? To what degree has hypnosis been substituted for anesthesia? What changes occurred in the syntax of Henry James during his career?
   b. Preparing a bibliography which includes all pertinent sources, employing the specialized indices appropriate to the special field, as well as specialized bibliographies. (Note: *The Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* is no longer appropriate for work at this level.)
   c. Reading and taking notes selectively and purposefully.
   d. Preparing a full level sentence outline.
   e. Writing of a paper which is not a summary of notes taken, but an expression in the writer's own words of the ideas and concepts which permit a clear answer to the research question proposed.

2. Writing a formal report.
   a. Formulating a purpose and reasons for a report which gathers, digests, and summarizes and then evaluates the facts and opinions on a particular subject: What are the rules, guides, and reasons for depreciation allowances? What cultural opportunities are available to the average citizen of this community? How can dif-

ferent fertilizers be used to increase crop yields?
b. Gathering of materials by library work, interview, and calculation.
c. Stating results in a form appropriate to the particular subject or field—i.e., final preparation after finding out how a particular business, governmental agency, or educational area prepares reports.

DEVELOPING CREATIVE WRITING:

1. Writing of one or all of the basic (and sufficiently small) literary forms—short story, drama, lyric poetry.

2. Criticizing various literary forms, using suitable aesthetic standards.

REASONING AND EVALUATION:

1. Developing understanding of material truth and validity; the study of formal logic, including induction and deduction, symbolic logic, and semantic concepts. Applying these in papers dealing with questions of pertinence to the university and world communities, with these papers tested for verifiable fact and valid logic.

2. Evaluating moral beliefs, political proposals, literary works.

STAGE EIGHT: ADVANCED COLLEGE COMPOSITION COURSES

1. Developing advanced exposition: Analysis of the natures, purposes, and techniques of various types of exposition, and practice in all of these.

2. Improving creative writing: Analysis of and practice in various literary forms, with emphasis on development of individual literary style. Designed both for the beginning professional writer and for the individual who wishes to satisfy his need for self-expression.

3. Using technical writing: The preparation of reports, summaries, abstracts, and other types of writing needed for specific scientific and technical purposes. Designed both for the writer who will need the skills and patterns of a specific professional area and for the writer who intends to make scientific report writing his profession.

4. Learning composition analysis: Analysis of the linguistic and literary activities involved in the processes of compostion, with emphasis on the meaningful correction and improvement of the writings of others, as a preparation for teaching a sequential program in composition, K-16.

CHAPTER THREE:

What?

. . . . *to teach in composition.*

Composition in the Language Arts

Basically, English teachers agree that the literate citizen must learn to read, write, speak, and listen with an habitual concern for the meaning of the word and the forcefulness of the sentence, paragraph, and selection as a whole, that is—with a concern for the integrity of language. Reading and writing are two sides of one coin. Listening and speaking are two sides of another coin.

Reading and listening involve "receiving" skills. Writing and speaking involve "sending" skills.

Not only are the techniques of reading-writing and of listening-speaking matters of reciprocal skills re-inforcing one another, but in most cases a given skill can be applied in each of the four areas. For example, the topic sentence is equally applicable as a skill in writing and speaking, reading and listening. Such a four-way correlation presents the student not with four different skills, but with one basic concept applicable to the art of language as a whole. All of the skills outlined below as matters of composition are equally applicable in all four areas of the language arts. When the four areas are consciously correlated by teacher and student, and when the carry-over is specifically pointed out, many advantages accrue. The objective practicality of a given skill is enhanced four-fold, each area can be used to motivate another, and a considerable amount of the English teacher's scarcest commodity—time—can be saved.

Underlying these four reciprocal and supplementary divisions of the language arts are the principles of semantics and logical reasoning. Often lip service is paid to "teaching the students to think" and to problem solving. But putting students in problem-solving situaions is not enough. Only some non-swimmers may profit by being thrown into the water. Without a knowledge of the strokes, or the skills of logical reasoning, the individual may flounder and drown. The remark that you cannot teach people to think is only partly valid. Many skills of semantics and logical reasoning are specific and tangible—the recognition of "loaded" words, the double checking of referents, the definition of terms, the distinctions between fact, inference, and value-judgment, the principles of the controlled experiment of inductive reasoning, the principles of the truth and the validity of deductive reasoning. Such skills and methods should be taught specifically and directly. It should not be assumed that such skills will be by-products of the other person's course. Semantic skills and thought skills are the basics of communication and should be taught as the foundation of all intelligent reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Checklist of Composition Skills

The following check list is designed to bridge a gap so often found in courses of study and curriculum guides between statements of motivation and statements of objectives. This gap can only be bridged by passing on to the student specific, objective skills. What qualities of language must a student know to write well? The following outline is proposed as a checklist of teachable, tangible writing skills. These skills are outlined cumulatively on the basis of the structure and force of the word, the sentence, the paragraph, and the composition as a whole.

CHECKLIST

The Qualities of Words

STRUCTURE (Vocabulary and lexical meaning):

1. Understanding concept of root
2. Understanding prefix signification
3. Understanding suffix signification.

FORCE (usage, contextual meaning):

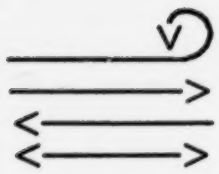
1. Utilizing the range of levels of usage
2. Utilizing the range of concrete-abstract usage of words
3. Utilizing the range of specific-general usage of words
4. Utilizing the range of denotative-connotative usage of words
5. Utilizing the range of literal-figurative usage of words
6. Avoiding semantic ambiguities and abuses (jargon, deadwood, loaded word, euphemism, triteness).

The Qualities of Sentences

STRUCTURE (syntactical analysis):

1. Understanding the basic subject-verb-completer

sentence patterns



a. Intransitive
b. Transitive
c. Passive
d. Linking

2. Understanding the basic concepts of sentence development
   a. Coordinate construction
   b. Subordinate construction
   c. Elliptical construction
   d. Abridged construction
   e. Minor sentence types
   f. Fragments

3. Understanding the basic concepts of sentence position introducer-SUBJECT-interrupter-VERB-interrupter-COMPLETER-follower

FORCE (rhetorical meaning):

1. Utilizing the range of sentence types
   a. Declarative
   b. Interrogative (rhetorical question)
   c. Imperative
   d. Exclamatory

2. Utilizing the range of sentence length
   a. The long complex sentence
   b. The short simple sentence
   c. The direct "punch" sentence
   d. Reduced predication (elliptical or abridged)

3. Utilizing the range of sentence movement
   a. The relative forcefulness of beginning, middle, and end sentence positions
   b. The normal subject-verb-completer sequence interrupted for meaningful emphasis
   c. The normal modifier, subject, verb, completer position inverted or transposed for meaningful emphasis
   d. Periodic sentences used for "speed" and emphasis
   e. Good and bad uses of delayed beginnings, delayed endings, and anticlimactic endings.
      It is lucky that you ducked.
      There are some men who are born to be leaders. (poor)
      As long as I can remember, I have stood all your insults.
      I have stood all your insults as long as I can remember. (poor)
   f. Compounding, series, parallelism and balance used for pointing up comparisons and contrasts
   g. Moderate use of typographical devices and intensives, with forceful word-order variation instead
   h. Avoidance of a parenthetical obstacle course and a morass of modification or subordination

4. Utilizing a range of sound devices
   a. Cacophony, euphony
   b. Alliteration
   c. Assonance
   d. Onomatopoetic words and rhythms
   e. Pause

The Qualities of Paragraphs

STRUCTURE (unity and continuity):

1. Understanding the concept of paragraph unity—that unity is a matter of O , the overall impact of the paragraph as a whole.

2. Understanding the concept of paragraph continuity—that continuity is a matter of —> —> —> , the logical sequence of its sentence parts.

3. Understanding the basic types of paragraph development
   a. Time
   b. Space
   c. Senses (5)
   d. Cause-effect
   e. Comparison-contrast
   f. Classification and division
   g. Part-whole / whole-part
   h. Order of importance

4. Understanding the concept of topic and support sentences

FORCE (emphasis and interest):

1. Utilizing beginning sentences for interest, closing sentences for emphasis, middle sentences for interest as well as support

2. Utilizing the range of devices for definition and establishing common ground and frames-of-reference
   a. Physical analysis (a sandwich)
   b. Functional analysis (the tail of a kite)
   c. Causal analysis (an automobile accident)
   d. Historical analysis (the growth of Main Street)

3. Utilizing the range of types of support
   a. Facts, figures
   b. Examples
   c. Anecdote, narrative
   d. Authority
   e. Quotation

4. Differentiating between "telling" and "presenting" (It was a cold morning. / There was frost on the window.)

The Qualities of the Composition as a Whole

STRUCTURE:

1. Extending the concept of unity and continuity to the paper as a whole
   a. Introductory paragraphs
   b. Topic paragraphs
   c. Supporting paragraphs
   d. Transitional paragraphs
   e. Summary or concluding paragraphs

2. Extending the concept of development to the paper as a whole—time, space, senses, cause-effect, comparison-contrast, classification-division, part-whole, whole-part, order of importance.

3. Emphasizing the concept of Beginning, Middle and End of a work as a whole.

FORCE:

Levels of Communication

The "level of usage" has been stressed to such an extent that the objective of "good" writing has tended to become synonymous with language etiquette. There are at least three other levels of appropriateness to which the good writer applies his skills.

1. "Level of Seriousness": distinguishing between idle chit-chat and thoughtful conviction, between the perfunctory and the consequential piece of writing.

2. "Level of Appeal": distinguishing between emotional and logical discourse, sophistry and logic, rationalization and rationalism, wrangling and argument, sensationalism and sensory appeal, sentimentality and compassion.

3. "Level of Abstraction": distinguishing between the resolvable and the irresolvable dispute, quibbling and definition, inference and fact.

4. "Level of Usage": distinguishing between formal and informal language, colloquial and illiterate usage, specialized terminology and pretentious jargon, necessary elaboration and elegant decoration.

Intangible as these attitudes may appear, they must be treated as directly and as objectively as possible. The skills involved should not be considered to be matters of "common sense" or "transferrence" or "by-products" of education in general—such disciplines are the direct product of English studies.

1. Utilizing the qualities of words, Semantics—the distinction between concrete and abstract, specific and general, denotation and connotation, literal and figurative wording.

2. Utilizing both the logical and emotional potentials of language in terms of basic Thought Skills.

a. Thinking and the Purpose of Language—*being habitually aware* . . .

(1) that facts, inferences and value judgments must be differentiated; that thinking is an attempt to bring order to a chaos of sensations and thoughts, beginning with our basic needs to survive (biologically, economically), to cooperate (socially, politically), and to realize our potentials (spiritually, aesthetically), proceeding to criteria of definition and measurement, and finally resulting in statements of facts, inferences, and value judgments.

(2) that language is only a map of the territory man believes to exist, that all words are symbolic thought abstractions, that things have been verbalized which do not exist, that things have not been verbalized which do exist, that recorded language enables man to amass, organize, exchange, and synthesize his facts, inferences and value judgments, that the map does not equal the territory.

(3) that there are four phases of response; happening (verbal and/or physical), impact, evaluation, and response (verbal and/or physical); that utterances range from pre-symbolic grunts, to ritualistic mumbo-jumbo or chit-chat, to responsive intercommunications; that words provoke both reflexes and reflection.

b. Thinking and the Limitations of Language—*being habitually aware* . . .

(1) that the word does not equal the thing; that facts are only accurate to the extent that the perceiver's sensory tools are reliable, that he has a sufficient amount of evidence available, that the phenomenon can be accurately observed under controlling conditions, and that the transiency of pheonomena and the probability of error have been taken into account; that his point of view be multi-oriented rather than bi-oriented.

(2) that a judgment should always be qualified; that value judgments are only valid to the extent that the evaluator's criteria are not limited physically, intellectually, or emotionally; that his point of view is multi-valued rather than bi-valued.

(3) that the "fallacy of allness," the misconception that everything can be said about anything, should be countered by adding a mental etc., that the structure of language can only approximate the structure of reality, that verbalizing the totality of anything is impossible, that thinking binds language and language binds thinking, that language functions only within limits.

(4) that the "fallacy of sameness or always," the misconception that any two things or events are exactly the same, should be countered by adding mental index numbers (World War 1, World War 2); that all things are contingent; that all events flow into one another; that no two occurrences are the same.

c. Thinking and the Meaning of Language—*being habitually aware* . . .

(1) that the sender and receiver may verbally by-pass one another, that effective communication requires the adjustment of sender and receiver to the occasion and to each other, that the sender must adjust his language to the level of comprehension of the receiver, and the receiver must judge not only the "letter" but the intent of the sender.

(2) that the logical appeals as well as the emotional overtones of a communication be taken into account, that communication necessarily involves both reason and emotion, that reason puts the emphasis on exactness, definition, illustration, analysis and logic; that emotion puts the emphasis on vividness, suggestion, vicariousness, analogy, and sentiment.

(3) that the total meaning of a communication is a combination of its connotations and its denotations, its implied as well as its expressed premises and inferences, its suppressed as well as its stated purposes, and the context of the entire situation.

Particular Forms

In addition to the Qualities of the Word, Sentence, Paragraph, and Composition as a Whole, certain other qualities need to be mentioned with reference to two major forms of writing—Exposition and Narration.

EXPOSITION—Thinking and Explanation:

Note—The expository skills of explanation and persuasion are basic tools for academic success and future literate citizenship. Increasingly mature reading, as well as writing, listening as well as speaking, depend upon the student's grasp of the range of expository skills. For this reason it is essential that a comprehensive, sequential program in expository writing be a major part of each student's English program during each year of school. Practice and competency in the expository forms should be stressed, even if some creative-writing time has to be utilized.

1. Being aware that explanation always involves a question which should be stated clearly.

2. Being aware of pitfalls resulting in faulty explanation.

a. Illustration or example—being certain to differentiate between the rule and the exceptions.
b. Comparison-contrast—being certain to differentiate between relevant and irrelevant similarities and differences.
c. Classification and division—being certain that each group is all inclusive at its own level and that each change of level is based on the same principle of classification.
d. Definition—being certain that the definition is not broader or narrower than the to-be-defined, that the definition does not repeat the to-be-defined, that the definition is negative only if the to-be-defined is negative.

EXPOSITION—Thinking and Persuasion:

1. Being aware that persuasion always involves a controversy which should be stated clearly.

2. Being aware that convincing one's opponent involves the thought skills of explanation (above) plus an additional emotional factor.

3. Being aware of reasoning pitfalls resulting in faulty argument.

a. Failure to realize that inductive reasoning—conclusions based on the law of probability—leads only to certainty if no exception can be guaranteed.
b. Failure to realize that deductive reasoning—conclusions based on the laws of the syllogism —leads to certainty only if the premises are correct.

4. Being aware of emotional pitfalls resulting in faulty argument.

a. Failure to argue the point, but instead to attack the personality of one's opponent.
b. Failure to argue the point, but instead to appeal to pity, force, authority, the "band wagon."
c. Failure to recognize one's own prejudices and/or the prejudices of one's group.

NARRATION—Setting-Description:

Note—The narrative form involves at least two major subdivisions of creative writing—description and characterization. For a student to write a good narration he must be familiar with the qualities of good description, good characterization, and good plot. Not until the student is competent in each of these areas can he be expected to combine them well in one of the most complex forms he will be asked to write—the short story. Often this is asked too soon. The following is meant to outline not only some of the skills or qualities involved, but also to suggest a sequence of steps in order of difficulty.

1. Understanding that one's point of view may be "close up" or "far away," that the range of description involves sight, sound, touch, smell, taste, position, motion, shape and color.

2. Understanding that the time, space and sensory dimensions of the setting may be presented literally by relatively complete reproduction of foreground and background, or that it may only be suggested by a limited selection of suggestive and sometimes symbolic details.

3. Understanding that the presentation of setting may be external, objective, sociological, or internal, subjective, psychological—in varying proportions.

4. Understanding that the setting and background of plot and character is an admixture of environmental conditions and hereditary premises.

5. Understanding that environmental conditions and hereditary premises may completely submerge the importance of event and character or vice versa.

NARRATION—Characterization:

1. Understanding that a character's personality is revealed by his thought, word, and deed; by the thoughts, words, and deeds of others about him (reputation); by the setting (environment); by what the author in his own person explains about him (editorializing).

2. Understanding that the presentation of a character's personality may be external, objective, physical, or internal, subjective, psychological—in varying proportions.

3. Understanding that a true character is a combination of personality traits, that a stereotyped characer is a conventionalized combination, and that a personalized trait is a single characteristic of personality.

4. Understanding that a personality usually has two sides—not necessarily good or bad in and by themselves.

a. Rational nature and reflective action.
b. Emotional nature and unreflective reaction.

5. Understanding that a personality usually moves between two poles.

a. Social conditioning.
b. Individual temperament.

6. Understanding that events may submerge the importance of the character or vice versa; that events may evolve unaltered by the character or vice versa.

NARRATION—Plot:

1. Understanding that conventionally narration involves conflict.

a. Conflict of one personality with another.
b. Conflict of a personality with his environment.
c. Conflict of a personality with his God.
d. Conflict of a personality with himself.

2. Understanding that conventionally narration is a movement through complication to simplicity.

3. Understanding that there are usually two climaxes

in a narration—the more significant one depending on the type of narration being told.

a. Climax in terms of action—that point at which the plot is circumstantially resolved.
b. Climax in terms of character—that point at which the plot is psychologically resolved.

4. Understanding that the plot-type (emphasis) story is the result of abundant action (quantity) and/or intensive action (quality); that it may be one of ingenious complications and surprise ending, or that it may simply be one of lively actions and an exciting climax.

NARRATION—Concept of Story:

1. Understanding the difference between fiction and non-fiction.

2. Understanding that fiction (realistically imitative or fancifully distorted) can deal with truths to the same extent as non-fiction.

3. Understanding that a narration (novel or short story) is necessarily a combination of plot, character, and setting—and sometimes theme.

a. Understanding that conventionally to have a narration—and not simply an action, a character sketch, a description, or an argument—plot, character, setting (and theme) must be used in combination.
b. Understanding that unconventionally a narration may emphasize one of these parts to such an extent that the narrative as a whole has a melodramatic, lyrical, or didactic impact rather than narrative impact.

4. Understanding that a narration may have main and minor plots, characters, settings and themes.

5. Understanding that the background time, place, action characterization, may be introduced at once at the outset of narration or worked in piecemeal during the course of the narration.

NARRATION—Narrator:

1. In some cases the inside narrator is appropriate.

a. An omniscient author tells the story.
b. The main character tells his story.

2. In some cases the outside narrator is appropriate.

a. An author-observer tells the story.
b. A minor character tells the story.

NARRATION—Theme:

1. Understanding that in a significant narration the writer may consciously or unconsciously embody a significant truth or conception of life.

a. Understanding that the truth introduced by the writer consciously can properly be called the narration's "theme."
b. Understanding that the truth discovered by the reader, but apparently introduced unconsciously by the writer, should be called something else—perhaps the "moral" of the story.

2. Understanding that the author's theme is brought out by emphasis or de-emphasis—by repetition, matters of proportion, inclusion and exclusion, inevitability and climactic impact.

Where?

. . . . *to find additional information.*

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